

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-06 SSO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 SP-02 PM-03 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /039 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3227
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
CINCUSNAVEUR
USCINCEUR
CINCUSAFE
CINCUSAREUR
USNMR SHAPE
USDOCOSOUTH
AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 10185

LIMDIS

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, GR
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS: A PEEK AHEAD

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1. THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS MOVING INTO ITS FINAL WEEKS. THE PARTY LEADERS ARE POUNDING THE HUSTINGS, CANDIDATES ARE SCROUNGING VOTES, AND THE PUBLIC IS BEING DELUGED BY SPEECHES, FLY SHEETS, AND RALLIES. THE ULTIMATE ISSUE IN THIS CAMPAIGN IS CARAMANLIS' LEADERSHIP. THE PRIME MINISTER IS AGAIN SEEKING TO PROJECT HIMSELF AS THE SOLE PLAUSIBLE LEADER OF THE GREEK NATION. HIS OPPONENTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO STRIP HIM OF THAT CLAIM. OBVIOUSLY, IN A NATION

WHERE FOR BETTER OR WORSE SO MANY OF OUR INTERESTS HAVE BEEN TIED TO CARAMANLIS' STRONG LEADERSHIP, THE UNITED STATES HAS MORE THAN A PASSING CONCERN WITH THE OUTCOME OF THIS STRUGGLE.

2. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM CONTINUES TO PREDICT A CARAMANLIS VICTORY IN THE ELECTIONS, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER RETAINING A COMFORTABLE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. IF SO, WE DO NOT EXPECT THE PRIME MINISTER TO USE HIS NEW MANDATE IN ANY PARTICULARLY DRAMATIC WAYS TO AFFECT OUR INTERESTS. THE GOG HAS ENJOYED A HUGE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT FOR THREE YEARS. DURING THAT TIME CARAMANLIS' APPROACH TO GREEK MEMBERSHIP IN NATO, TO CYPRUS, TO THE US-GREEK DCA, AND TO RELATIONS WITH TURKEY WAS DETERMINED BY CALCULATIONS OTHER THAN EXCLUSIVELY PARLIAMENTARY ONES. A RENEWED MANDATE WOULD NOT CHANGE THE CALCULUS CARAMANLIS USES TO ASSESS HOW BEST TO PROMOTE GREEK INTERESTS. NEVERTHELESS, SHOULD HE AGAIN OBTAIN A CLEAR PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, HE WILL BE IN A STRONG POSITION TO RESPOND MORE READILY IF, FOR EXAMPLE, TURKEY MAKES SOME SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONARY MOVES ON CYPRUS OR IN THE AEGEAN. BUT THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO EXPECT THAT HE WILL EMERGE FROM SUCH A VICTORY DETERMINED TO MAKE ANY ABRUPT CHANGES IN HIS FOREIGN POLICY.

3. THERE HAS BEEN INSISTENT SPECULATION THAT AFTER THE ELECTIONS CARAMANLIS MAY CHOOSE TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH GEORGE MAVROS AND HIS UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER. THE PUTATIVE PURPOSE OF THIS COALITION WOULD BE TO BROADEN THE BASE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND STRENGTHEN ITS HAND IN DEALING WITH "NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUES," PARTICULARLY IF CARAMANLIS RECEIVES ONLY A SHAKY MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT CARAMANLIS WOULD EXTRACT FROM MAVROS AS PART OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT A FULL COMMITMENT TO THE GOG'S FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICIES IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE FRUITS OF POWER. IT SEEMS AT LEAST AS LIKELY THAT A UDC-NEW DEMOCRACY COALITION WOULD NECESSARILY REFLECT SOME OF THE CENTER'S POSITIONS. SPECIFICALLY, THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFERENCES ON SUCH A MATTER AS GREECE'S JOINING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, A COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY BE LESS FLEXIBLE AND DYNAMIC IN DEALING WITH TURKEY AND CYPRUS. (MAVROS HAS BEEN ARGUING THAT GREECE CANNOT NEGOTIATE WITH TURKEY AS LONG AS TURKISH TROOPS ARE ON CYPRUS AND TURKEY MAINTAINS A THREATENING POSTURE TOWARDS GREECE IN THE AEGEAN.) THE US-GREEK DCA WOULD PROBABLY BE SUBJECT-ED TO AT LEAST SOME COSMETIC CHANGES AND POSSIBLY BE LONG DELAYED TO REFLECT MAVROS' STRONG OPPOSITION TO AN ARRANGEMENT HE BELIEVES ULTIMATELY BENEFITS TURKEY. AND ON NATO WE MIGHT EXPECT A COAL-ITION TO BE EVEN MORE RELUCTANT TO LEAD GREECE SMARTLY BACK INTO FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE ALLIANCE'S MILITARY WING.

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O R 081650Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 10185

LIMDIS

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5. AS MUCH ATTENTION IS BEING PAID TO WHO WILL FINISH SECOND IN
THESE ELECTIONS AS TO WHO WILL FINISH FIRST. MANY PEOPLE, OF ALL
POLITICAL COLORATIONS, ARE FEARFUL THAT ANDREAS PAPANDREOU MIGHT
MANAGE TO NOSE OUT MAVROS FOR THE SECOND SLOT.
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6. THE IMMEDIATE PRACTICAL IMPACT OF SUCH AN OUTCOME WOULD BE MINIMAL IF CARAMANLIS RECEIVES A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY OR FORMS ONE IN COALITION WITH MAVROS. IN EMOTIONAL TERMS, THE SHOCK WOULD BE VERY GREAT INDEED, AND EMOTION COUNTS FOR MUCH HERE. PAPANDREOU, WHO IS THE ONLY PERSONALITY ON THE NATIONAL STAGE WHO CAN COME CLOSE TO CARAMANLIS, WOULD BE SEEN BY THE RIGHT AS A GROWING AND IMMINENT THREAT. ON THE LEFT MANY WOULD BE TEMPTED TO COME TO TERMS WITH HIM. WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN WOULD DEPEND ON PAPANDREOU'S EVENTUAL COMPORTMENT. IF HE SWINGS TOWARDS THE CENTER, SO MUCH THE BETTER FOR THE US. IF HE CONTINUES TO PLAY SAVONAROLA, SO MUCH THE WORSE. BUT UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES GREEK DEMOCRACY WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE SORT OF POLARIZING TENSIONS WHICH ALMOST ALL DEMOCRATS IN GREECE FEAR.

7. THOSE FEARS BRING US TO WHAT IS THE OVERRIDING US INTEREST IN GREECE, THE MAINTENANCE AND STRENGTHENING OF GREEK DEMOCRACY. BARRING SUCH UNLIKELY OUTCOMES AS A CRUSHING DEFEAT FOR CARAMANLIS AND A VICTORY BY THE FAR LEFT, THESE ELECTIONS ARE UNLIKELY TO PRODUCE ANY UNCONTROLLABLE IMMEDIATE TENDENCIES TOWARD POLITICAL INSTABILITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO DO MUCH TO STRENGTHEN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS HERE. A SMASHING VOCTORY BY CARAMANLIS WOULD FURTHER IDENTIFY THE SYSTEM WITH HIS PERSONALITY. A NARROW SQUEAK FOR THE PRIME MINISTER WILL INCREASE THE JOCKEYING AMONG THOSE WHO HOPE TO SUCCEED HIM, INCREASING THE RISK OF FACTIONALIZATION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF THE CENTER-CENTER/RIGHT COALITION THAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF CARAMANLIS' LEADERSHIP.

8. THUS THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR FROM THE ELECTIONS ARE RESULTS WHICH LEAVE DEMOCRATIC STABILITY UNDIMINISHED AND ALLOW CARAMANLIS THE LIBERTY TO MOVE CONSTRUCTIVELY ON OUR OTHER INTERESTS HERE. EVEN IN SUCH FAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, WHETHER CARAMANLIS CHOOSES TO MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION WILL CONTINUE TO

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DEPEND ON HOW HE FACTORS OUT THE GREEK NATIONAL INTEREST.
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Message Attributes

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